GUIDE TO THE AB6 AINU FILE

[The Ainu (Ezo) are thought to be the aboriginal non-Mongoloid inhabitants of the Japanese, Sakhalin and the Kurile islands. Today they are located principally on Hokkaido, with much smaller numbers on Sakhalin and the Kuriles. The geographic co-ordinates of this area are 140° - 145° 30' East longitude and 41° 30' - 45° 30' North latitude for Hokkaido. Sakhalin reaches from the northern tip of Hokkaido to 54° 30' North latitude and is between 141° 30' and 144° 30' East longitude. The Kuriles extend northeastward from Hokkaido's eastern coast out to about 157° East longitude and up to 51° North latitude. The Ainu share Sakhalin with a group of unrelated aboriginal people, the Gilyak (RX2).

Presently about 12,000 of Hokkaido's five million residents are classed as Ainu, but probably only about 200 are "pure-blooded." Current figures for Sakhalin are under 2,000, but no breakdown of mixed and pure-bloods is given. There are fewer than 100 on the Kuriles. The population in 1891 was only between 15,000 and 17,000, but at that time nearly half were full-blooded. The mixture with the Japanese has reduced not only the traditional culture, but the absolute numbers of pure Ainus as well. Although 7: Munro states that the 1939 Ainu population was approximately 160,000 (P. 1), this must certainly be a mistake (by a factor of ten) since every other source clusters around the earlier figures.

The Ainu language, while well studied, is not closely related to any other language stock. Nineteen Ainu dialects were

differentiated in 1961. Thirteen are found on Hokkaido and six on Sakhalin. Nearly all young Ainu speak Japanese, many as a first language, and even the language of the older people is heavily salted with Japanese loanwords.

The Ainu traditionally subsisted by hunting, gathering, and especially fishing. Settlements, of from four to 1,600 people, were usually located along streams, near salmon spawning grounds if possible. Villages were politically and economically independent. The Ainu of Hokkaido were left virtually alone by the Japanese from the twelfth century, when they drove the Ainu from Honshu, until the sixteenth century when they became politically and economically interested in the area. In the last half of the nineteenth century, as social and economic consequences of the Meiji Restoration, there was a very large influx of Japanese onto Hokkaido. According to most sources, the traditional Ainu culture is essentially extinct.

There are eleven sources in the Ainu file. Eight are in English, two are translated from the German (8: Pilsudski and 10: Pilsudski), and one is translated from the Russian (9: Lavrov). 1: Takakura is the most general source, but it is prineipally historical. It discusses conquest by and acculturation to the Japanese. Sources 2, 3, and 4 all have some general ethnographic material on the traditional culture. 2: Batchelor is by an English missionary who spent fifty years among the Ainu (1877-1924). As well as general ethnographic data, it contains specific information on lore, religion, and ethnopsychology. 3: Hitchcock emphasizes Japanese-Ainu relations. It also discusses diet, physical characteristics, mythology, religion, and the Bear Cult. It also contains a number of good photographs. 4: Landor is by a nineteenth century traveler and artist and concentrates more on description of the topography with less information on material culture, and religion.

5: Sternberg is an article which studies Ainu religion and the role of inau (offertory) objects in particular. 6: Sugiura and Befu is a study of kinship organization in the Saru River Valley, on Hokkaido. 7: Munro is by a Scottish physician of forty years residence among the Ainu (1900-1942), who was married to a Japanese woman. His account is mainly concerned with religion, but also covers the home, house building and related ceremonies, exorcism, and social organization. 8: Pilsudski is a comprehensive study of Ainu and Gilyak reproductive practices, ranging from beliefs about menstruation, sterility and menopause to female status, childbirth, and care of the mother and infant. The section on the Gilyak has not been translated for this file, but may be found in the RX2 Gilyak file. 9: Lavrov describes basic motifs in Gilyak and Ainu ornamental carvings in order to derive information on the origin of the Gilyak bear vessels and band and string ornamentation in the Ainu bear sculpture. 10: Pilsudski traces the relationship between the Tonchi, original inhabitants of the Sakhalin islands, and the Ainu. The study is based on archeological records and on Ainu oral traditions. 11: Watanabe attempts to reconstruct Ainu society as it existed immediately prior to the 1880's, before the Japanese had introduced extensive agricultural reforms. The author's objective was to study the effect of the ecological system on subsistence activities, group structure, beliefs, and rituals. Seven of the sources are partially or completely by ethnologists (5-11). The fieldwork for the file covers eighty-two years, from 1877 (Source 2) - 1959 (Source 11). With the historical information, the file has a good time depth.

The Ainu file is a good general file, with detailed information on religion and Ainu-Japanese relations. Unfortunately there is a large body of material on the Ainu which has not yet been translated from the Japanese. This is especially true for the linguistic studies from the 1920's to the 1950's. The file was processed in 1954 and between 1962 and 1975.]